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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7688
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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 2510
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 3721
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RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Iran
- [1](#)2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel has decided that after it presented its report about Operation Cast Lead to the U.N. earlier this month, there is no need to set up an independent inquiry

committee. Maariv quoted Olmert as saying that he was the only one to seek victory and an end to the Hamas regime during Operation Cast Lead and that DM Ehud Barak and other politicians exaggerated the number of casualties that would result from an Israeli takeover of Gaza.

Israel Radio reported that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asked U.N. envoy Tony Blair to assist U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell in reviving Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. The radio reported that Blair acceded to Mitchell's request.

The media cited Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's boast at a mass rally in Tehran yesterday that Iran already is a nuclear nation. Media quoted Ahmadinejad as saying that Israel must be destroyed once and for all if it strikes. Some media quoted him as saying that he asks for Syrian's assistance for that purpose. The media noted the lack of effectiveness of protests in Iran yesterday, mostly due to preventive measures taken by the regime. The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli officials as saying that Iran's nuclear bragging will persuade the world of the danger posed by the Iranian nuclear program. Israel Hayom quoted the U.S. as saying that Iran is exaggerating regarding its capability to enrich uranium. Israel Radio quoted Gerard Araud, the French Ambassador to the U.N., as saying at Columbia University that one must wait until China's position is heard before imposing sanctions on Iran. Yediot quoted Iranian opposition sources as saying that Israel's threats against Iran are only causing them damage.

Haaretz, Israel Hayom, and other media reported that Kadima Knesset Member Shaul Mofaz told associates yesterday that he will form a separate faction if his party's primaries are not moved up. Israel Hayom quoted a supporter of Kadima's chair Tzipi Livni as saying that Mofaz and MK Eli Aflalo are cancerous tumors in the party. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Likud members as saying that they do not want Mofaz in the party.

Major media reported that two months ago, while seven GOI ministers were discussing the conditions of the Shalit deal, a Hamas terror cell tried to infiltrate Israel through Egypt and kidnap an IDF soldier. The plan was to kill the soldier, bury his body, and negotiate over its return. The cell's five members were caught with explosives and a gun with a silencer.

Haaretz translated a New York Magazine feature on President Obama's Kenyan relatives.

Haaretz quoted the think tank Reut Institute as saying that Israel is facing a global campaign of delegitimization. The institute called on the Israeli Government to treat the matter as a strategic threat. Israel Radio quoted Baroness Tonge, a Liberal Democrat Member of the U.K.'s House of Lords, as saying a few days ago that the Israeli rescue team harvested organs in Haiti. The radio noted that MP Nick Clegg, her party leader, failed to condemn her assertion. Talking on the radio, Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky said that this was a modern blood libel. Media reported that French Ambassador to Israel Christophe Bigot told reporters yesterday that anti-Semitism is a problem not just for French Jews but for the entire French Republic and the world as a whole. Bigot said that IDF actions are being exploited by extremists.

Media reported that, two years after a High Court ruling on the matter, work has started on a new route for the security fence in the Bil'in area -- 1,700 m. from the original one.

Haaretz and Israel Radio reported that a nine-justice panel of the Supreme Court ruled yesterday that a law allowing courts to remand people suspected of security offenses in absentia contravenes the Basic Law on Human Dignity and Liberty and that it is, therefore, unconstitutional. The court said the law causes disproportional harm to the suspect's right to be present during deliberations on whether to keep him in jail. The East Jerusalem man referenced by the decision had planned to assassinate former Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski. Media said this was the seventh time the High Court has overruled a law passed by the Knesset.

Channel 10-TV and other media reported that excerpts of the station's report on corruption in the PA were broadcast all over the

Arab world. The media quoted the PA as saying that it is an Israeli plot.

Maariv quoted the defense periodical Jane's as saying that Egypt is developing long-range missiles.

Yediot reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu is setting limits to the proposed absentee voting law: eligibility will be limited to those Israelis who have been abroad for less than five years and have maintained a link with Israel during that period. 100,000-200,000 Israelis would now be eligible under these conditions, instead of 500,000 as foreseen by the initial proposal.

The media reported on former U.S. President Bill Clinton's chest pains and the subsequent catheterization he underwent.

Yediot ran a feature on Avinadav Begin, the grandson of the late PM Menachem Begin and the son of Likud Knesset Member Benny Begin. Avinadav Begin is quoted as saying that he is neither Jewish nor Israeli, that he does not respect the symbols of the state, and that his grandfather did not change anything in Israel's relations with Egypt.

1. Iran:

Block Quotes:

1. QBreak the Iranian Program -- There Is No Other Way

Veteran journalist and television anchor Dan Margalit wrote on page one of the independent Israel Hayom (2/12): QA democracy under the Iranian threat and the neighboring states wavering between placing an obstacle to Tehran and getting closer to it have no time to hesitate. The debate isn't between sanctions solely on the Revolutionary Guard and sanctions on the entire Iranian nation, but about the need to make a strong-minded decision to make that Iranian nuclear project disappear -- as Cato repeatedly vituperated against Cartago.... [This project must be broken] through economic sanctions or by military force, in a joint operation or by a superpower -- Ahmadinejad cannot be allowed to enrich uranium, either at 80 percent or at less.... There is no alternative when facing Tehran's evil regime.

II. QThe Eleventh Hour

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (2/12): QSome say tough sanctions [on Iran] will send the masses into the arms of the government and undermine the opposition. But yesterday's rally showed that the regime doesn't have a problem putting on a show of support; and that the opposition is weak, fragmented, and under siege. The prospects of the opposition are unpredictable, regardless of what happens on the sanctions front. Pretending otherwise strikes us as a lame excuse for doing nothing. We also understand that sanctions on gasoline could enrich the IRGC [Iran Revolutionary Guards Corps], which already controls Iran's black market in commodities. Still, the debilitating impact on the regime of endless lines at petrol stations should not be underestimated. Dawdling by two U.S. administrations and by an international community preoccupied with immediate economic gratification has brought the world to this eleventh hour. It may already be too late for the real sanctions option. But given the stark alternative -- isn't it worth a try?

III. QIs the Administration Off-Target with its Focus on the IRGC?

Washington correspondent Hilary Leila Krieger wrote in The Jerusalem Post (2/12): QConcerns that current broad-based sanctions legislation pending before Congress would deeply hurt the general [Iranian] population -- an undesirable circumstance in and of itself, but also because the U.S. is hoping to strengthen rather than weaken the popular reform movement opposing the regime -- have been cited in the administration's lukewarm response to the measure. If

the bill passes, the U.S. would sanction foreign companies providing refined petroleum to Iran, essentially trying to bar Iran's access to gasoline. Yet the administration's use of targeted sanctions against the IRGC [Iran Revolutionary Guards Corps] and other regime elements might not be as different from broad-based measures such as Congress's as the administration implies. That's because nearly a third of Iran's economy is estimated to be controlled by the IRGC.

IV. QDelicate Sanctions

Columnist Shmuel Rosner, who was Ha'Aretz's correspondent in Washington, wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (2/12): QWhat the [U.S.] administration plans is harming the Iranian economy with a surgical scalpel -- harm the regime, but not the public-at-large; impair the Revolutionary Guard, but not the reformist protesters. This has understandable, even good reasons -- mainly for those who believe that the Iranian regime is swiveling to the point of near-collapse. But such surgical sanctions require thin-rope acrobatics, the result of which may lack drama. This week Prime Minister Netanyahu demanded that foreign ambassadors impose Qcrippling sanctions on Iran.Q But the United States wants crippling sanctions against the Revolutionary Guard -- not Iran. There is a big difference between the two.

12. Mideast:

Block Quotes:

1I. QAn Unacceptable Fight against Protest

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (2/12): QIsraeli security forces have recently intensified their fight against peace activists from here and abroad who seek to protest against the occupation and identify with the Palestinian inhabitants.... It could be expected that a country that has ruled another nation for many years would show tolerance toward manifestations of unarmed protest against the occupation and its ills. The state should also respect the right of other countries' citizens to show solidarity with the local people and join protests alongside Israeli and Palestinian activists. The harassment of individuals who do not toe the line and posters in the streets that incite against human rights groups should arouse concern in the heart of every Israeli. The suppression of public protests under the transparent guise of protecting state security does not augment Israel's international standing. Such a policy gives a bad name to the Only democracy in the Middle East.Q Officials at the top of government must instruct the security forces and the Interior Ministry to immediately stop these heavy-handed attacks on nonviolent protest.

II. QSarah Palin's Friendship

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (2/12): QLiberal Democratic Jewish voices, like Leon Wieseltier at The New Republic, are aware that there is a problem with the rampant anti-Semitism in their camp. And they fear that as a consequence, American Jews may take a second look at Palin with her Israeli flag lapel pin. As Wieseltier wrote this week, QA day does not go by when I do not do my humble part to prevent such a transformation [of American Jewry from liberals to conservatives] from coming to pass.

The fact of the matter is that for Israel's sake such a transformation can't happen quickly enough.... Sarah Palin's emergence as the mouthpiece of populist opposition to Obama presents Israel's supporters -- and particularly Israel's Jewish supporters -- with an extraordinary opportunity and an extraordinary challenge.

Palin's coupling of support for Israel with her populist domestic agenda marks the first time that support for Israel has been treated as a core, populist issue. The opportunity this presents for American Jews who care about Israel is without precedent. But of course, to make the best use of this opportunity, American Jews who support Israel have to disappoint Wieseltier. They have to acknowledge that the Left has rejected their cause and increasingly

rejects them.... PalinQs future in politics is unknowable. But what is clear enough is that today hers is the strongest single American voice opposing ObamaQs foreign policy and the loudest advocate for supporting Israel and denying Iran nuclear weapons. For this she deserves the thanks and support of American Jewry.

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